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magic breakfast
fuel for learning



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32% of pupils regularly skip breakfast. UK aid agency offers practical solution.

New study shows almost a third of children regularly go without breakfast before school, leading to increased levels of inactivity, poor health and obesity compared to classmates.

A study by the University of Essex has found that 32% of pupils regularly go to school having not eaten before leaving home¹. Food aid agency Magic Breakfast provides a free breakfast to schools with over 50% free school meals, as schools report that over a quarter of their pupils arrive too hungry to learn.

Carmel McConnell, founder of Magic Breakfast, welcomed the study, saying 'we're seeing our experience on the ground confirmed in this research. We provide free healthy breakfast food to schools, feeding 3,000 children each morning in term time. This means children arrive at school on time, and attendance, behaviour and concentration all improve. Breakfast makes a huge difference to children at school; Dr Sandercock's work has proved that a healthy breakfast is probably the fastest, cheapest way to improve child health. It costs us £63 per year for a child to have a really nutritious start to the day. Long term health benefits make this a no brainer investment. So why don't we make sure every pupil starts the day with the right food as fuel for learning?'

Scientists at Essex looked at the fitness, physical activity, weight and breakfast habits of more than 4,000 children. The study found that a quarter of boys and a third of girls regularly went to school without eating breakfast. And the children who did not eat breakfast were less active than those who did. The research found that boys who skipped breakfast were twice as likely to be classified as unfit compared with those who always managed to eat something before leaving home.

Louise Nichols, headteacher at Kingsmead Primary School in Hackney, says 'Children use the breakfast club for a variety of reasons including hunger and social contact...Magic Breakfast has meant a safe, happy start to the day for all Kingsmead Children that need it.'

'Studies like this show the huge challenge we face' states McConnell, 'we have a very serious problem here, but our combination of food aid, parent education and social enterprise to create better food revenues in low income communities has been shown to work. With the Magic Breakfast model, we can make sure every child and parent wants, and has access to a healthy breakfast. The report shows how urgency this is needed'

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G R H Sandercock, C Voss and L Dye; *Associations between habitual school-day breakfast consumption, body mass index, physical activity and cardiorespiratory fitness in English schoolchildren*, European Journal of Clinical Nutrition [4th August 2010]

Notes to Editors:

Magic Breakfast is a food aid agency delivering free nutritious breakfasts to primary schools since 2001. Magic Breakfast is working to make sure every child has access to a healthy start to the day, feeding over 3000 children in 116 schools in the most deprived areas of the UK, daily.

Magic Breakfast works with schools in a partnership arrangement to eradicate the serious problem of child malnutrition. Together they make sure children arriving to class have the right fuel for the day, improving concentration, participation and setting them up for a healthy lifestyle. Magic Breakfast is supported by Quaker Oats and Tropicana orange juice, the Morgan Stanley International Foundation, Transformation Trust and a variety of small companies including Etc.venues, LCH.Clearnet, and All Star Lanes. It also raises revenue for food aid through its social engagement training firm, Magic Outcomes.

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